

**DIVINE CERTAINTIES IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD**

1 John 5:18-21

**Intro:** In three of the four final verses of 1 John we have the verb used which has been employed by the Apostle John throughout this wonderful epistle. It is the verb *know*. It is a word of certainty, of assurance, of confidence. It appears some forty times in this epistle. And now, as we come to the final four verses, we see that three of the verses begin with the word, “we know.” And with those words the Apostle John was putting himself along side of every true believer in Christ who originally received and read this epistle, as well as every believer who has read this epistle from those days down to today. We may not all know these truths with the same degree of assurance and understanding, but this is true teaching. Verses 18, 19 and 20 give us these divine certainties. Any teacher who contradicts any of these statements is not a true teacher of the Word of God.

There are many things that we don’t know. Long ago Solomon wrote, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). And James emphasized that same truth in the NT when he wrote in James 4:13-16:

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

But not only in 1 John, but also throughout the whole Bible we find truth about which we can with the greatest assurance we can say, “We know.” What about Romans 8:28? Or Paul’s great statement in 2 Timothy 1:12, “. . . for I know whom I have believed . . .” Or Job’s words in Job 19:25, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth . . .”

Now in our text for this morning the Apostle John not only said, “I know,” but he said, “We know,” putting himself with his readers. So he did not know what we read about in our text this morning as an apostle, but as a child of God like we are.

Now let us see what we are to know as the people of God.

### **I. What we know about sin (1 John 5:18).**

Now this is not the first time that we have come to statements like we have in the beginning of verse 18 – “that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” Guy King in his very helpful commentary on 1 John says that this statement is limited just to those who have been born of God. It is not the well meaning person, nor the one who is always trying harder, nor the one who believes in turning over a new leaf, but he is talking about the person who is truly born of God! And we can go on to say that it is not true of any other person. Any reasonable person is going to be trying harder to be a better person, but, try as he may, he can never try hard enough to be successful in finding acceptance with God. Pleasing men is one thing, but pleasing God is an entirely different thing. Man by nature does not have that capacity. Maybe we can make ourselves pleasing to other people, but pleasing God is beyond our reach. Besides, the Apostle John is not thinking here about some isolated incident; he is talking about a way of life in which we do not sin.

But we must add that when the Apostle John said, as he has before in this epistle, “sinneth not,” he was not saying that a child of God never sins. He may still commit sins, but he doesn’t live in sin. Sin bothers a true Christian, and he, or she, is not going to be happy until that sin is confessed to God, and forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

Now ask yourself, Do you know this? If a person claims to be a Christian, and yet lives in sin, he doesn’t really know what a Christian is. A Christian is one who is born of God. He has a new nature, a divine nature. And this makes it impossible for him to live in sin. Can a Christian sin? Yes. Will he live in sin? No! We know this because this is the teaching of the Bible, and, if you are truly saved, you will know it in your heart too.

But what does the second part of verse 18 say? I have a marginal reading in my Bible to the effect that “himself” probably should be “him.” Now there is a sense in which we have the responsibility to keep ourselves from sin. We don’t go where we are going to be tempted to sin. We don’t go with the crowd who do things habitually that we know are not right. We don’t read books or look at pictures that can cause us to think sinful thoughts. But even as Christians all we can do to keep ourselves is

never enough. So it is possible, and probably is the case here, that the phrase “he that is begotten of God” refers not to the Christian, but to Christ! So the real explanation as to why we can’t go on sinning after we are born of God, is not because we are keeping ourselves, but because the Lord Jesus Christ is keeping us.

Isn’t this what Jude had in mind by the way he closed his one-chapter epistle? Listen to Jude 24-25:

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

When the Lord is keeping us from sin, “then the Wicked One toucheth him not.” Expositors seem to be agreed that “toucheth” is not a strong enough translation of this verb. The verb actually speaks of taking hold of a person so that he cannot do what he wants to do. He wants to please God, but the Devil is going to hold him back to get him involved in sinful things. The Devil is stronger than we are, and he is not visible to our eyes, but the Lord sees him, and the Lord is far superior to the Devil in strength.

Ask yourself again, Do you know this? If you do, does it reflect where your trust is in your conflict with sin? It has to be, not in yourself, but in the Lord.

But let us go on to verse 19.

## **II. What we know about our relationship with God, and what we know about the world (1 John 5:19).**

What a contrast there is between the first part of this verse, and the second part. We used to be in the second part, but now we are in the first. We are “of God.” Now we have been born of Him. We have a new life in Him. We are in His family. God is our Father. We may not know exactly when we were born of God, but neither do we know when we were born in this world. Our parents have told us, but the fact that we were born is obvious. We may not know exactly when we were saved, but we know that we are. We love God. We love His Word. We love His people. We hate sin, and it grieves us when we do anything, or even

think anything, that we know is displeasing to the Lord.

On the other hand, we have a new understanding of the world. The world as the word is used here describes where those who aren't Christians belong, and where their interests are. What is the basic problem with the world? It lieth in wickedness. Many believe this part of the verse means that the world lieth in the Wicked One, the Devil. The world is held hopelessly in the grasp of the Wicked One. "Lieth" seems to suggest contentment, no struggle to be free because the world has not idea of the bondage it is in.

Now if we know what we claim to know, then we know that there are only two categories of people in the world. Those who are still "of the world," and other who are still living in the world, but they are "of God." There is no third group. And you don't move back and forth from one group to the other. The only way to get out of the world which lies under the dominion of the Devil, is through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the faith to do that comes from God! Cf. Ephesians 2:8-10.

This is what the Apostle Paul was thinking about when he wrote his greetings to the churches of Galatia. His word are found in Galatians 1:3-5. Let me read them to you:

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

But now let us go on to verse 20 to see something else that we know.

### **III. We know that the Son of God is come.**

Most people don't know this. They may talk about Jesus, or even of Christ, or Jesus Christ. But they really have no idea what was happening in Bethlehem where the baby Jesus was born. They may call His mother, the virgin Mary, but they have no idea as to what was taking place when the baby Jesus was born. If you can say that you know that the Son of God is come, you know a fact of history, and of revelation, and of redemption, that the most brilliant people in the world have never figured out. Thank God every day if you can say that you know that the Son of God is come.

But how did you find it out? How did I find it out? Our verse says that “the Son of God” Himself “hath given us an understanding.” In other words, we can’t take any credit for thinking this all out in our minds, while others were not able to figure it out. The understanding that we have as to who Jesus Christ is, and why He came, is understanding that was given to us *even though we did not ask for it.*

Turn back with me for a few moments to chapter 2 in this epistle to the place where the Apostle John spoke of some who had left the church, and had left the Lord in verse 19, and then he told why they all did not leave. (Read 1 John 2:19-27.)

Who has given us the understanding that we have about the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God. Well, I think the most complete answer we can give to that question is that our understanding was given to us by God the Father, by the Lord Jesus Himself, and the Holy Spirit is adding to it the longer we know the Lord and the more we read the Bible.

What is understanding? It is the power or the capacity to know, and to be able to discern between that which is true, and that which is false. Some of us have read about Jeroboam who was the king of Israel after the kingdom was divided. He was afraid that the Israelites would continue to go back to Jerusalem to worship God, and so what did he do. He made two golden calves and told the Israelites that they were the gods who had led them out of Egypt. He said that because he had no understanding. And remember that no one can figure out the message of the Bible unless God gives them the ability, the capacity, to understand. When Adam and Eve sinned, their minds became incapable of know what was true and what was false concerning God. And so they were liable to believe anything. And history has plenty of illustrations for us to show how true that was.

But we know that the Son of God is come,, and hath given us an understanding (which we did not have before). But why were we given an understanding? Read on in verse 20. “That we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

John Stott has pointed out in his commentary on 1 John that some expositors believe that the word “true” can be translated *real*. The word “true” appears three times in verse 20. Let me read the verse using the word *real* where our Bibles say true. (Read verse 20.)

How does anyone know who the real God is? How does anyone know who Jesus Christ is, and that He is the Son of God? And how does anyone know that there is a Holy Spirit Who is also God? Only those to whom God is pleased to give an understanding. And when that understanding is given, the person believes and is saved.

There are times when God gives understanding without being asked to do so. It came to me that way. But I don't think that there is anything wrong if any person is interested in the Bible, but cannot really understand it, to pray for understanding. Or if a person is interested in knowing which God is the real God, to pray that God would give him understanding. Even we as Christians need to pray as we come to the Word of God that God would increase our understanding of His Word so that we can know His will.

After Solomon became king of all Israel, the Lord appeared to him in a dream (because God was using dreams for that purpose in those days), and said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." What was Solomon's answer? He said to the Lord, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9).

Every day you and I who know the Lord should praise Him for giving us the understanding to know the truth of His Word, and to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. It truly is a gift from God.

But there is one more verse before we finish. It is verse 21, and it is a warning.

#### **IV. A final warning (1 John 5:21).**

Using the words to show his love for the people of God which he had used in 2:1, 18, 28; 3:7 - "little children." The people of God often act like little children in the decisions that they make, but here in these verses the Apostle John seemed to indicate that there is something like "little children" in all of us.

"Keep" means to guard, and in the present tense it means to be always on guard against anything becoming a god in our lives. An idol is anything that takes the place of God. It can be a career, money, sports, pleasures, and so on. See 1 Corinthians 10:7.

See how “keep” is used in two different ways in Jude 20 and 21, and then in 24.

**Concl:** In spite of how much we know, we always need to be on our guard against those things that would draw us away from complete devotion to the Lord. We are no longer lying in the wicked One, yet sin is still a temptation. The only safeguard in temptation is a life of strong fellowship with the Lord.

“Amen” shows that verse 21 is his prayer for them